



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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FISH SPECIALISTS GATHERED FOR CHRISTMAS MARKET

Unusual fishery items -- like eel and octopus -- are now appearing in the fish markets for the Christmas trade. While most of us will be eating roast goose or turkey for Christmas not an inconsiderable portion of Americans will be eating lutefisk, carp, red snapper, or the aforementioned eels and octopus. It's tradition, says the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Over the Christmas season, many people of Norwegian, Swedish, or Danish descent will be gathering in homes or at church and lodge suppers to feast on heaping plates of lutefisk -- quivering white jelly-like flakes of fish, covered with melted butter and garnished with lingon berries. A Scandinavian Christmas just wouldn't be Christmas without lutefisk.

The product known as lutefisk is made from dried cod imported mainly from Norway. The dried cod, somewhat resembling sticks of wood, must be soaked first in a solution of lye and water until the fish regains its original moisture content and size.

The traditional Christmas dish of Italians is eels. Live eels are caught in rivers along the Atlantic coast from North Carolina to Canada -- but the big ones -- some up to three feet long -- come principally from the St. Johns area of Quebec, and are brought alive to market in specially constructed barges. Large numbers of Italian-Americans in such cities as Philadelphia and New York will soon be laying plans for a Christmas eve supper of fried or marinated eels.

Live carp are also being gathered in the markets for sale to the descendants of Poles, Germans and other middle-European peoples. Carp are fattened on corn in commercial ponds and are sold alive to the customer for traditional Christmas eve suppers. Carp in "Polish sauce" is a favorite holiday dish.

Salt cod -- prepared as "Bacalao Biscayenne" -- is the basis of the Christmas eve supper for many people of Spanish descent. Red snapper, caught in the Gulf of Mexico, is brought to West Coast ports for the Christmas use of Americans of Japanese and Chinese origin. Perhaps the most unusual import, though, are the octopus, and cuttlefish, also known as sepia. Quantities are brought from Portugal for the Christmas use of the descendants of Greeks, Italians, Frenchmen, and Spaniards in this country. Octopus or cuttlefish cooked in oil is a favorite holiday dish of many.

Besides the "unusual" there are also the usual fish additions to holiday menus -- from the "easy to prepare" oyster breakfast served on Christmas morning in the South, to the rounds of fish and shellfish canapes and hors d'oeuvres found at holiday-season parties.

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